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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQ AND EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

PARIS - THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAQ AND EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

FRONT PAGES ARE OVERWHELMINGLY DEVOTED TO THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ. COMMENTARIES AND REPORTS AROUND ON THE NAZI CAMPS AND "EUROPE'S NEED TO REMEMBER" (CATHOLIC LA CROIX). THE DAVOS WORLD ECONOMY FORUM IS ALSO A MAJOR STORY. IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, EDITORIALIST YVES THREARD COMMENTS: "THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO WILL MOCK PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S DAVOS SPEECH. BUT WHAT HE HAS GOING FOR HIM IS REALITY. GEORGE BUSH IS SO HATED OUTSIDE HIS OWN COUNTRY THAT ONE CAN GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING APPEALING IF ONE WORKS AT ESTABLISHING ONE'S DIFFERENCE WITH BUSH. CHIRAC IS RAISING THE BANNER OF WISDOM AS A COUNTER PROPOSAL TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S WARRIOR APPROACH."

BUT IRAQ, THE COMING ELECTIONS AND YESTERDAY'S VIOLENCE ARE BOTH THE SUBJECTS OF GRIM FACTUAL REPORTS AND OPINION COLUMNS WHICH INCLUDE COMMENTARY ABOUT PRESIDENT BUSH'S "FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE" SINCE HIS INAUGURATION. RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO TITLES ON ITS FRONT PAGE: "THE BLOODIEST DAY FOR AMERICANS IN IRAQ." IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION EDITORIALIST JACQUES AMALRIC PENS AN OP-ED TITLED "GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE CONCEALED IRAQI QUAGMIRE." RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE POINT'S EDITORIALIST CLAUDE IMBERT WHOSE COLUMN IS ENTITLED "A DEPRESSION OVER THE ATLANTIC" WRITES: "IF TODAY BUSH IS SMILING AT EUROPE, IT IS ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE THE IRAQI QUAGMIRE IS TURNING INTO A CALAMITY." (SEE PART C)

IN LEFT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR REPORTER SARA DANIEL WRITING FROM BAGHDAD COMMENTS: "IN IRAQ, WHERE THE SPECTER OF A RELIGIOUS CONFLICT BETWEEN SUNNIS AND SHIITES MAY WELL TURN INTO A CIVIL WAR, EVERYONE IS EXPECTING A BLOODBATH ON THE DAY OF THE ELECTIONS. NO ONE HAS MUCH HOPE."

REPORTING ON THE EFFORTS FOR A TRUCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT, CHRISTOPHE AYAD WRITES IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION: "THE PROCESS UNDERWAY MAY BE, AS WASHINGTON'S SPECIAL ENVOY WILLIAM BURNS SAYS, 'THE MOST PROMISING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST,' BUT IT IS STILL A VERY TENUOUS ONE, WHICH CAN FAIL AT ANY MOMENT."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQ AND EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

"THE BLOODIEST DAY IN IRAQ FOR AMERICANS"

PHILIPPE GELIE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (01/27): "IN A LANDSCAPE WHICH IS ALREADY VERY SOMBER, YESTERDAY WAS ONE OF THE DARKEST DAYS FOR AMERICANS IN IRAQ. IN THE FACE OF SUCH VIOLENCE, PRESIDENT BUSH CALLED UPON EVERY IRAQI TO VOTE ON SUNDAY AND TO 'CHALLENGE THE TERRORISTS.' PRESIDENT BUSH IS NOT KEEN ON PRESS CONFERENCES. IF HE DECIDED TO GIVE ONE, IT IS BECAUSE HE NEEDED TO SEND A MESSAGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. SINCE HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO REMAIN PERPLEXED ABOUT AMERICAN'S FOREIGN POLICY. BUT YESTERDAY PRESIDENT BUSH WAS NOT READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. JUST TO COMMUNICATE."

"BUSH CALLS ON IRAQIS TO 'CHALLENGE THE TERRORISTS'"

PASCAL RICHE IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (01/27): "PRESIDENT BUSH DOES NOT REGRET ANYTHING HE SAID DURING HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS. DURING YESTERDAY'S PRESS CONFERENCE HE REITERATED HIS MESSAGE ABOUT 'PLANTING THE BANNER OF LIBERTY.' BUT OTHER THAN REPEATING THAT PARTICULAR PHRASE, PRESIDENT BUSH ESSENTIALLY TRIED TO ERASE THE NAIVE IMPRESSIONS LEFT BY HIS 'PYROMANIAC' SPEECH. AND THE FEELING THAT HE IS TOTALLY DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY."

"A DEPRESSION OVER THE ATLANTIC"

CLAUDE IMBERT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE POINT (01/27): "WORLD EVENTS SPEAK IN FAVOR OF BETTER WEATHER BETWEEN AMERICA AND EUROPE. YET NATIONAL AND POPULAR BELIEFS TEND TO SEPARATE

RATHER THAN BRING EUROPE CLOSER TO AMERICA. IF PRESIDENT BUSH IS SMILING AT EUROPE TODAY, IT IS ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE THE IRAQI QUAGMIRE IS TURNING INTO A CALAMITY WHICH IS FANNING THE FIRES OF ANTI-AMERICANISM AROUND THE WORLD. VOTING BOOTHS FOR THE IRAQI ELECTIONS ARE BEING SET UP AMONG CAR BOMBINGS AND SUICIDE ATTACKS. THIS IS A MEDIOCRE SHOWCASE FOR DEMOCRACY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT BUSH IS SENDING MORE TROOPS TO IRAQ, HE IS ALSO THINKING ABOUT LEAVING THIS LAND COVERED WITH LANDMINES. EUROPE IS BEING COURTED FOR ITS ARAB CONTACTS AND ITS EUROS. THIS WILL BE THE EXTENT OF ITS INVOLVEMENT. AS FOR MORE GENERAL ISSUES, BOTH WILL PROBABLY BACK DOWN A LITTLE: WASHINGTON WILL MAKE SOME SACRIFICES TO MULTILATERALISM. AND EUROPE WILL CONCEDE THAT MULTILATERALISM IS BETTER FITTED TO WORDS THAN TO ACTION. BUT OVERALL, PRESIDENT BUSH WILL NOT CHANGE. ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY. THIS IS PARTICULARLY CLEAR ABOUT IRAN. EUROPE AND THE U.S. CONTINUE TO HAVE DIFFERENT VISIONS OF THE WORLD AND ITS FUTURE. FOR AMERICA, LIBERTY IS PART OF THE 'AMERICAN DREAM.' THERE IS NO 'EUROPEAN DREAM.' EUROPE'S MILITARY LETHARGY AND LOVE OF MANKIND HAS TURNED EUROPE INTO A SOFTY. AMERICA SEES AN ABSOLUTE 'EVIL' IN ISLAMIC TERRORISM, WHILE FOR EUROPE IT IS A RELATIVE 'EVIL' THAT CAN BE ERADICATED WITH A FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY. A RECENT REPORT BY THE CIA MENTIONS CHINA AND INDIA AS FUTURE WORLD POWERS, BUT NOT EUROPE. THE REPORT ALSO MENTIONS EUROPE'S 'CONTINUING EXPANSION' AS A DISSOLVING FACTOR FOR EUROPE'S UNITY AND AS AN OBSTACLE TO ITS AMBITION TO BECOME A WORLD POWER. THIS IS PROBABLY A FAIR PROGNOSIS. BUT A STINGING ONE NEVERTHELESS WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT THE U.S. IS ARDENTLY PREACHING FOR TURKEY'S EU MEMBERSHIP!"

"GEORGE BUSH AND THE CONCEALED IRAQI QUAGMIRE"  
JACQUES AMALRIC IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (01/27): "WHAT PRESIDENT BUSH DOES NOT SAY, EITHER BECAUSE HE DOES NOT THINK IT OR BECAUSE IT WOULD AFFECT THE LOGIC OF HIS REASONING, IS THAT ONE CANNOT EQUATE THE FALL OF TYRANNY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF ELECTIONS TO THE BEGINNING OF DEMOCRACY. THIS CAN BE VERIFIED IN IRAQ, BUT ALSO IN AFGHANISTAN, AND EVEN IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA. DEMOCRACY IMPLIES TOLERANCE AND RESPECT; IT REQUIRES TIME AND CONSTANCY. IT REQUIRES COUNTER-POWERS AND AN INDEPENDENT JUSTICE SYSTEM. BECAUSE HE HAS FOR TOO LONG CONCEALED THE FACT THAT THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM IS IN FACT A FIGHT AGAINST TYRANNY AND FOR THE DEFENSE OF AMERICA'S INTERESTS, HE HAS FORGOTTEN A MAJOR INGREDIENT ALONG THE WAY: THE FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICE. IT IS AS IF PRESIDENT BUSH'S 'LIBERTY' DID NOT INCLUDE THE CHECHENS, OR THE UZBECKS. THIS IS WHY WE CANNOT BELIEVE IN PRESIDENT BUSH'S SINCERITY." LEACH